

Birth Control Pills (combination contraceptive pills)

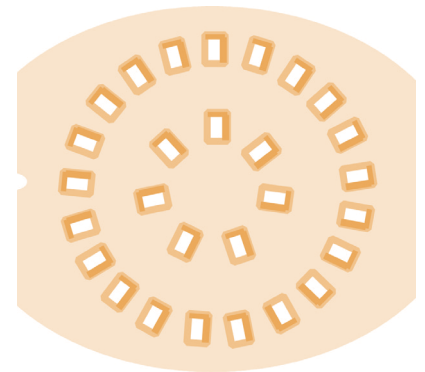
How pills work:

Combination hormone pills stop your body from releasing an egg, so no egg can be fertilized. The hormones also cause the cervical mucus (liquid at the opening of the uterus) to thicken, which can stop sperm from getting into the uterus.

How to use the pills:

Take one pill every day at about the same time every day. For instructions on how to begin taking your pills, ask your doctor or health care provider.

If you miss any pills, you may be able to “double up,” but ask your doctor or health care provider for specific instructions. If you do not want to get pregnant, you should either not have sex or use foam and condoms as a back-up method *until after your next period*. You may also ask about Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECP).



Center for Health Training

1809 Seventh Avenue, Suite 400

Seattle, WA 98101-1341

206.447.9538 tel

206.447.9539 fax

www.centerforhealthtraining.org website

seattle@jba-cht.com email

Effectiveness:

If you take one pill every day, about the same time every day (perfect use), the effectiveness rate is 99.9%; only one woman out of 1000 would become pregnant. Because some women miss taking their pills or take them at irregular times (typical use), the pill effectiveness rate can be 95% or lower. If you are taking some other medications, the pills can be less effective. Tell your health care provider any time you take other medications while taking birth control pills.

Benefits of the pill:

Many women report regular and lighter periods with fewer menstrual cramps and a clearer skin complexion when taking pills. Pills provide protection against ovarian cancer, uterine cancer, benign breast disease, ovarian cysts and iron deficiency. Taking pills does not interrupt sex. If you want to get pregnant, you can become pregnant immediately after you stop taking the pill.

Potential side effects and disadvantages:

Some women have bleeding or spotting between periods (called breakthrough bleeding), mild nausea, breast tenderness and/or moodiness. Recent research has shown that weight gain or loss cannot be attributed to the pill. Most modern pills have a low dose of hormones, and cause fewer side effects.

Using birth control pills will not give you protection against HIV (AIDS) or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) such as chlamydia, herpes, genital warts, gonorrhea, hepatitis B and syphilis.

Potential risks:

Some women should not take pills because of specific health conditions. If a woman has a history of cardiovascular disease, it is recommended that she not take birth control pills. Ask your doctor or health care provider.

Risk to life and health is greater from pregnancy than from pill use. Most modern pills have a low dose of hormones and can be taken with little risk.

Cigarette smoking increases the risk of serious cardiovascular side effects (blood clots, heart attacks, strokes), especially for women over 35. Women who use birth control pills are strongly advised to not smoke.

Where can you get pills?

Birth control pills require a prescription from a doctor or qualified health care provider. Call your local family planning clinic for information.